



OFFICE OF REGULATORY STAFF



**CONSUMER SERVICES
DIVISION**

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CONSUMER SERVICES DIVISION

ACT 175

Act 175 created the Office of Regulatory Staff to investigate complaints affecting the public interest. With the creation of the Office of Regulatory Staff, consumers no longer contact the Public Service Commission to file an informal complaint. All informal complaints are processed through the ORS.

To assist consumers in having their complaints or inquiries directed to the proper agency for processing informal complaints, we are requesting that the Companies have their staff advise consumers to contact the ORS, not the PSC.

State of South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff



Consumer Complaint Line
737-5230 (local)
1-800-922-1531 (outside Columbia)

On-Line Complaint form:
www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov

CUSTOMER BILL FORMS

CUSTOMER BILLS SHALL SHOW:

- 1. The reading of the meter at the end and the beginning of the period for which the bill is rendered.**
- 2. The date on which the meter was read.**
- 3. The number and kind of units measured.**
- 4. The applicable rate schedule, or identification of the applicable rate schedule. If the rates are not shown, the bill should have a statement that the rate schedule will be furnished upon request.**
- 5. Total amount due.**
- 6. A marking to identify an estimated bill.**
- 7. Number of days for which bill is rendered.**
- 8. Date payment is due (Customer shall be given 25 days to make payment before late charges are added).**
- 9. Date of bill.**
- 10. Telephone number where utility can be contacted during regular business hours and non-business hours.**

DISCONNECTION OF SERVICE

PROCEDURES FOR TERMINATION OF SERVICE

A water utility must give a 10 day written notice prior to disconnection of service.

A wastewater (sewer) utility must give a 30 day written notice via certified mail, with copies forwarded to DHEC and the ORS.

At the expiration of the 30 day period, the utility must send another notice advising that in not less than 10 days and not more than 30 days, service may be disconnected without further notice.

CUSTOMER DEPOSITS

1. **AMOUNT OF DEPOSIT:** Equal to an estimated two months bill for a new customer or an amount equal to two highest consecutive bills of the past twelve months.
2. **INTEREST ON DEPOSIT:** 3.5% interest shall be paid by the utility to customers required to make a deposit. Interest is accrued annually and shall be paid to the customer every two years and at the time deposit is returned.
3. **DEPOSIT RETENTION:** Deposits shall be refunded with interest after two years unless the customer has an unsatisfactory payment history.
4. **DEPOSIT RECORDS:** The Utility shall keep records that show the name and address of depositor, amount and date of deposit, and transactions regarding the deposit.

COMPLAINT PROCESS

Oral Complaints: Utility has 7 days to respond to complaints.

Written Complaints: Utility has 14 days to respond to complaints.

If a utility is unable to respond to complaints in 7 or 14 days, depending on the type of complaint, then a request for an extension should be directed to the Consumer Services Division.

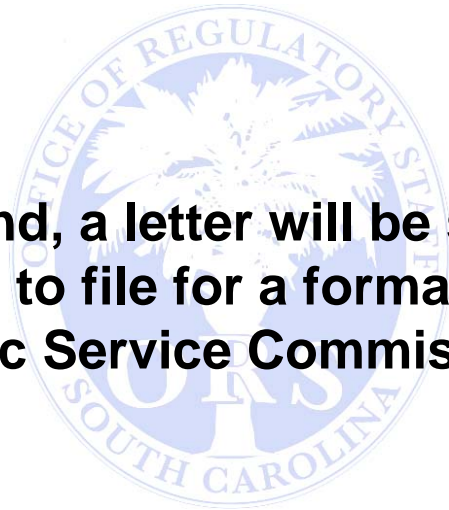
Consumers are encouraged to initially contact the Company.

If a consumer is not satisfied with the Company's response to their complaint, they can request an informal meeting with the ORS and a Company representative. If the complaint meeting does not result in a resolution, then the consumer has the right to file for a formal proceeding before the PSC.

FAILURE TO RESPOND



If a utility fails to respond, a letter will be sent to the complainant advising them on steps to file for a formal proceeding before the Public Service Commission.



In re: Our File No.

Dear Mr

This letter is sent in regard to your complaint filed with the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) against (Company). Your complaint was received in the Consumer Services Division via a (phone call/fax/email/letter) on (date) and an investigation was initiated via a (phone call/fax/email/letter) to the Company on (date). Although the ORS staff has notified the Company of your complaint and has begun attempts to resolve this situation, the Company has not provided a response as of this time.

Please be advised, you have the right to file a *formal complaint* against the Company and request a hearing before the Public Service Commission. To file a formal complaint you should send a written request for a formal complaint hearing along with your written complaint. The written complaint should contain your name and address, the name of the utility company, a clear and concise statement of the factual situation surrounding the complaint and of the nature of the relief sought from the Public Service Commission. Your request for a formal complaint hearing should be mailed to: *Chief Clerk/Administrator, Public Service Commission, Post Office Drawer 11649, Columbia, South Carolina 29211*. The Public Service Commission may schedule a public hearing if it determines that reasonable grounds exist. At the hearing, both you and the company can present testimony before the Commission. After hearing the testimony, the Public Service Commission will make a decision and issue an Order ruling on your complaint.

Should you decide to request a hearing and file a formal complaint with the Public Service Commission, please provide a copy of your request to the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff and to the Company. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact me at ...

Sincerely,

WATER AND WASTEWATER COMPLAINT TRENDS

- The Consumer Services Division investigates and mediates complaints and inquiries involving private investor owned utilities.

WATER AND WASTEWATER COMPLAINT TRENDS

- From January 1, 2006 to present, the Consumer Services Division received 182 complaints involving water companies and 42 complaints involving sewer companies.
- For the same period last year, there were 98 complaints involving water companies and 71 involving sewer companies.

WATER AND WASTEWATER COMPLAINT TRENDS

Reason for increase in number of water complaints due to:

- Customer Awareness
- Customer Outreach
- Company Filings for Rate Adjustment

WATER AND WASTEWATER COMPLAINT TRENDS

COMPLAINT DATA
Since January 1, 2006

Total number of complaints and inquiries
across all regulated industries = 2,770

Water/Wastewater Industry = 224

WATER AND WASTEWATER COMPLAINT TRENDS

Types of Complaints:

- Billing (High Bills, Deposits)
- Quality of Service (Water Quality, Pressure)
- Rates
- Proposed Rates (Notice of Filing for Rate Adjustment Protest Letters)

WATER AND WASTEWATER COMPLAINT TRENDS

Breakdown of Complaint Types

Water and Wastewater

- Billing = 66 Complaints
- Service = 63 Complaints
- Rates = 29 Complaints
- Notice of Filing (Protest Letters)
= 54 Complaints

CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

- RESPONSIVENESS
- ANSWERS
- CONSUMER EDUCATION
- UNDERSTANDING CUSTOMER NEED

The seal of the Office of Regulatory Staff, South Carolina, is a circular emblem. It features a palm tree in the center, with the words "OFFICE OF REGULATORY STAFF" arched across the top and "SOUTH CAROLINA" arched across the bottom. The letters "ORS" are prominently displayed in the center, partially obscured by the palm tree.

QUESTIONS